

*Last Sunday we were privileged to be visited by our link CMS missionaries, Alex and Jane Cacouris and their three children, Mylo, Maia and Louis. They have been working in Rio, Brazil for the past two years under extremely challenging circumstances and bring us a message of the insights their experiences have taught them about poverty and its Christian response. **Read Isaiah 58: 1 – 11.***

1. Introduction: What and Where is Poverty in Rio?

- Rio de Janeiro is a beautiful place, built in the middle of a rain forest and beside the sea and its lovely beaches. Alex is Associate Chaplain at Christ the Redeemer, the English-speaking Church in Rio. Jane focusses on Social and Community Action in the neighbouring *favela* (i.e. slum) called *Santa Marta*.
- In Rio 25% live in *favelas* built into the mountain-side, where there is no fresh water, no sanitation, hardly any food and no money. *Favelas* are controlled by gangs and bandits, there is no rule of law and life expectancy is very low.
- There is also poverty of Spirit: a lack of 'God' and a lack of understanding of the message of salvation by grace. **The Bible is packed with references to God's reflections on the poor and how we should be helping them.** Whether people are destitute because of the way they have been treated, or because of their own mistakes, God loves them: He made them, He wants them to know His peace.

2. Walking the Talk. Isaiah 58: 1-5

- **Isaiah 58: 1-5** speaks to a nation who appear to hear and obey Him, particularly on the equivalent of a Sunday, but their actions don't match their apparent desires: they still go their own way.
- **Vv. 6-7** spell out a real, viable response to poverty None of these things win our Salvation: that is by Grace alone, but they are a great test of whether we have received and understood Grace.

3. Walking the Talk in Rio.

- 1) Jane is involved with the Mary and Martha Charity School which was started in *Santa Marta* by a wonderful lady 20 years ago, beginning with feeding the children and moving on to educating them. Not one of those 'children', who are young adults now have joined a gang.
- 2) *Santa Marta* was one of the worst *favelas* 10 years ago, until people prayed for it consistently. This last 6 months lawlessness has returned (no jobs/ wages) and Jane experienced a shoot-out in school.
- 3) The Church of the Nazarine is in the *favela* and runs a 'Church on the Street' daily at 5pm when the hungry are fed, nappies, razors, and toiletries etc. are distributed and shelter found for the wanderer. All this is followed by a short church service and prayer time.
- 4) The Rio Food Fair: once a month refugees are invited to cook delicious meals for the better-off in Rio and they get paid for their dishes. (?) Run by Christ the Redeemer congregation who also run:
- 5) Family Fun Days with a short service for the many English-speakers from numerous countries who don't get round to thinking of coming to church and finding out about Jesus and His love for them.
- 6) Prison work: Drug traffickers are visited and listened to: some are unwitting but still incarcerated.
- 7) Tear Fund emoja project starting up to get people involved in cleaning up rubbish from the streets.
- 8) Individuals: Peter the journalist bought 150 rubbish tip children Christmas presents and is now working with local churches and a charity to help the people who live on the rubbish dump. Luke the Lawyer actually lives in a dangerous *favela* called *Providência*. He has built a Community Centre for meals, Bible Studies and Alpha Courses and one young man called Ian has come to faith.

4. Walking the talk in Dorking.

- Be thankful that we have so much – instead of being paralysed by guilt because we are so rich.
- Pray about the thing God wants us, specifically, to get involved with, at home or abroad.
- Then be courageously generous with our time, prayers and money.

No room for questions, anyway I'm just blown away by how much Jane and Alex have done in 2 years. Please pray for them, they have spent themselves and paid the price in terms of health.